

THE SHOE-BLACK.

"SHINE yer boots, sir?" sang out Jonas Groves, the shoe-black—"Shine yer boots, sir?" and many passers-by, attracted by the bright

face and cheery voice of the boy, responded to his invitation, and placing their feet upon his box, got their boots famously blacked.

Jonas had quite an interesting history of his own; and as I happen to know all about it, I shall forthwith give it to the little readers of *The Children's Treasury*.

He was a country boy, and had always lived in a village among green fields, and surrounded by fine old trees, in which the beautiful birds sang continually their sweet hymns of praise.

His father died when he was very young; and when he was twelve years old his

mother also died, being carried away by small-pox. Jonas was now alone in the world, and resolved to go to London. So he begged his way along the road and through the villages and towns until he reached the big city, where he

was sure there must be money and food enough for a poor little boy like him. But people in London were far too busy to pay him any attention, and soon he spent the few pence he had, and sold some of his poor clothes for food to allay his hunger. He was often tempted to dishonesty; but I am quite certain, that Jonas never became a thief. How he lived for eighteen months I cannot say; but a year and a half passed away, and no one who had known him during his mother's life would have recognized in the half-starved and ragged Arab who wandered about the markets picking up odd





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jobs and scraps of food, the once well-clad and well-nourished child of widow Groves. Passing a corner of a wide East End street one day, the ragged lad stopped to admire the bright dress and brisk manner of a shoe-black, who in a beautiful new uniform was soliciting some gentlemen for work. Jonas lingered near the place, and when the gentlemen had passed away he entered into conversation with the shoe-black. The boys were of about the same age, but one looked cheery, well-fed, and comfortably clad, whilst the other was as wretched every way as a poor boy could be.

"You'r in luck to-day," said Jonas.

"How much ha' ye took?"

"That last brownie makes it two bob even," responded the shoe-black, rattling his pocket full of pence as he spoke.

"I wish I had such a chance; I ain't had nothing to eat all day," said poor Jonas; "and I don't know wheres I'm to go to-night."

"Come along with me. I guess our 'spector 'll take ye on, if ye mean work, and aint a bad 'un."

"Will he though?" said Jonas eagerly.

"Oh, I'll work as hard as I can if I only have the chance!" "Well, eat that now," and the boy gave him a great hunch of bread, the remains of his own dinner, "and I'll be ready to go in half an hour, and take ye with me." Jonas clutched the bread, and quickly and thankfully devoured it.

When the clock struck six, he followed the shoe-black to the Home, and was favourably received by the inspector, who allowed him to rest in the kitchen; and having promised him employment on the morrow, gave him some hot food

and a few garments more respectable than those he had on.

Next day, to his intense delight, he was entrusted with a shoe-black box, brushes, blacking, and an old uniform that had belonged to another boy.

He worked well, earning the hearty commendation of the inspector; and as each day he improved, it was decided, after he had been in the brigade for a month, to give him a new suit of uniform and cap, and enter him fully as a member of the Union Jack Shoe-black Brigade.

Nothing could exceed the pride with which he surveyed his new dress, with its badge and bright brass No. 8, in the shop windows as he passed along.

Jonas worked hard, and remained in the brigade some years, earning golden opinions from every one, and regularly saving each week a portion of his takings. The Sunday-school also became a great delight to him, and soon he gave evidence of having closed with God's offers of mercy, and of having begun to live a Christian life.

One day, having cleaned the boots of a sea-captain, the latter hurriedly gave him a coin out of his pocket, and passed on to catch a train. Jonas touched his cap, and looking at the money saw that the gentleman had given him a sovereign.

His first feeling was one of joy; but quickly this passed away, to be succeeded by the hot flush of conflict which swept over him. "It's a mistake," he said to himself, "the gent didn't mean it—I musn't keep it—I'm not a thief!" Rushing hastily after his customer, he overtook him close to the station. "Please, sir," said Jonas,

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil :

"you've made a mistake, and giv me a sovereign; here it is—I'm not a thief."

A look of pleasure overspread the captain's face. "You're an honest boy," he said; "I'll not forget you;" and, taking back the sovereign, he gave Jonas a shilling, and went on to the train. The lad felt very happy that evening as he went home; and when, ere he retired to rest, he bowed his knees in prayer, and repeated the words, "Lead me not into temptation," he thanked God who had given him grace to act at once and decidedly in resisting the momentary suggestion to keep the money.

The next day the captain called; and learning from the inspector the boy's history and character, he resolved to offer him a place on board his ship. This Jonas gladly accepted, and, with the aid of his bank savings and a gift from the gentlemen on the committee of the brigade, bought a thorough seaman's outfit, and entered the good ship *Mermaid* as Captain Robertson's attendant. There his steady and upright conduct obtained favour and reward. First he became an ordinary seaman, then he was rated as an able-bodied seaman, then he became third mate; and a few weeks ago, his vessel being in port, he came to see his old inspector and the Home at Limehouse, where he had been so well and kindly cared for when he was only a poor ragged boy.

At his particular request the boys at present in the brigade were gathered together to a good tea, the cost of which Jonas paid; and when the tea was over, he rose and told them the interesting details of his life, a brief outline of which I have just given you. He urged upon the lads, in a few earnest and

affectionate words, the importance of at once becoming decided Christians, real followers of the Lord Jesus, so that when temptation came to them they might, by the grace of God, be enabled to say, "How can I do this thing, and sin against God?" "If I had kept that sovereign," concluded Jonas, "I would have been to-day an unhappy outcast, afraid to look any honest man in the face, because I would be myself a thief; but, thank God, before the trouble came I had given myself into the hands of Christ, and now I can truly declare that I have ever found Him to be the most blessed friend that a poor shoe-black or a sailor-boy could have."

UNCLE TOM.

HOW APPLE-TREE COURT WAS WON.

By HESBA STRETTON,

Authoress of "Jessica's First Prayer," etc.

(Continued.)



I was of no use to stay and argue any longer. A knot of brutal-looking men had gathered round, only restrained from attacking them by the fear that some policemen had actually been placed at the entrance of the court, to come to the rescue in case of a fight. It was not prudent, or even possible, to force their way through them in the attempt to enter any of the other dwellings. Disappointed and defeated, they returned into the street, and carried the news to George Lancaster.

How great his disappointment was no words can tell. He had counted upon

He shall preserve thy soul.—PSALM cxxi. 7.